

THE STATUS OF THE POLITICAL IN CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

KLARTEXT!

A SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS, ACTIVISTS, CURATORS AND THEORETICIANS
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Statement

Since the mid-1990s, video has played an important role in my artistic practice in thematic installations. Since the year 2000, I have also produced videos independent of exhibitions; these can be presented outside the direct framework of art and move between art and political activism.

The central theme of the video "This is what democracy looks like!" (38 min., 2002) is the events of a prohibited demonstration against the World Economic Forum on July 1, 2001 in Salzburg, during which 919 demonstrators were closed in for seven hours without any immediate cause. The basic democratic right of freedom of public expression was denied, while the representatives of the concerns, who lacked democratic legitimization, were able to pursue the neo-liberal reconstruction of society, undisturbed and with the public excluded, in the framework of the WEF. The events of the demonstration are portrayed in the video from the perspective of six demonstrators.

The video collaboration with Dario Azzellini "Disobbedienti" (54 min., 2002) discusses the Italian militants who go by that name; they earlier acted under the label "Tute Bianche" and recently as "Big Precarious Alliance". They led activities against prisons for refugees in Italy and took part in the mobilization for democratic globalization. The Disobbedienti not only engage in political analysis, but also show ways of operating and achieving alternative societal development.

The video "Venezuela", also realized with Azzellini, focuses on the social transformation that has taken place since 1998, during the time of the Venezuelan government controlled by Hugo Chavez, better known as the Bolivarian Process. This is a broad process of self-organizing, from which a progressive constitution, an industrial law, new possibilities for education and a multiplicity of other reforms for the impoverished majority in this potentially rich country developed. The film gives a voice to the true participants in the social process – the underlying strata: employees of the oil enterprise PDVSA, women farmers of a new cooperative, borrowers from a women's bank project, activists from a poor district in Caracas, workers in occupied factories, and indigenous people.

The videos do to a large extent without off-screen commentary, which in many documentations, as transitions, comparisons or questioning makes judgments, creates distance or can express an explicit distancing from the actions. Through this formal reduction and the strong presence of the protagonists, the position of the filmmaker comes closer to the position of those interviewed. The conceptual basis of the video points to the fundamental sympathy with the analyses and practices addressed, through which the video becomes a political statement.

